

March 1, 2005

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New Inhaler Law Prompts Local Coalition to Offer Education

Idaho children with asthma can breathe easier because of a new law that allows them to keep their inhalers with them while in school. The law took effect in Sept. 2004, and the Asthma Coalition of Idaho wants educators, students, and parents to know their rights. In Idaho, an estimated 113,000 people live with the adverse effects of asthma.

Nearly 5 million asthma sufferers in the U.S. are under age 18. Asthma is the most common chronic condition among children, and affects one in 20 children. Asthma is also the number one cause of school absenteeism among U.S. children, accounting for more than 14 million total missed days of school.

Before the new Idaho law took effect, some schools throughout the state and locally kept student inhalers locked up in a desk drawer or cabinet. This caused some concern because if a child were to have an asthma attack, the child had to wait until the inhaler or medication was taken out of the drawer or cabinet to get relief. On Sept. 1, 2004, the asthma inhaler law went into effect making it possible for students to carry their inhalers with them and use the inhalers when necessary. The Asthma Coalition was involved in advocating the change in the inhaler policy in schools.

To increase awareness of the new inhaler law, South Central District Health is helping the Idaho Asthma Prevention and Control Project (IAPCP) conduct a survey among school staff and parents in selected schools in Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls counties. This survey will help to detect schools that may need more information regarding the new law.

South Central District Health is also organizing an asthma training for child care providers on Wednesday, Mar. 30, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the College of Southern Idaho in the Taylor Building. This training will give child care providers the tools and knowledge they need to care for children with asthma and allergies.

In addition to the March training, the South Central Idaho Asthma Coalition will sponsor an education seminar in May designed to provide the public with more knowledge about asthma, how to manage their disease, and the different treatments that are available. South Central District Health will provide more details about the seminar at a later date.

For more information about asthma or the upcoming education seminars, contact South Central District Health at 737-5988. More information is also available at the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America website, <http://www.aafa.org>.

Side Bar #1

Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Child Care Providers

Instructor: Lindarose Allaway, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Location: College of Southern Idaho
Taylor Building, Room 276
315 Falls Avenue
Twin Falls, Idaho
Date: Wednesday, March 30, 2005
Time: 6:30-9:30 p.m.
To Register Call: South Central District Health
208-737-5988
Register by March 28, 2005
Space is limited

Side Bar #2

Asthma Facts

- An estimated 20 million Americans suffer from asthma; that is one out of every 15 Americans. The prevalence of asthma has been increasing since the early 1980's across all age, sex, and racial groups.
- Each day, 14 Americans die from asthma. There are more than 5,000 deaths due to asthma in the U.S. each year, many of which are avoidable with proper treatment and care. In addition, asthma is indicated as a "contributing factor" for nearly 7,000 other deaths each year.
- The annual cost of asthma in the U.S. is estimated to be nearly \$18 billion.
- Asthma is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization among children.
- Asthma accounts for one-quarter of all emergency room visits in the U.S. each year. Two million emergency room visits are attributable to asthma related conditions.
- Asthma has been present since ancient times. The word asthma derives from an ancient Greek word meaning "labored breathing" or panting. The word asthma was first used to describe an illness by the famous Greek physician Hippocrates. Throughout history, different treatments were used such as Owl's blood wine, chicken soup, and many other folk remedies. Modern medicine has revolutionized asthma treatment and there are now many different methods to help asthmatics relieve symptoms.

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